

To Parents & Guardians:

Introducing *FLASH* - the Family Life & Sexual Health Unit

Dear Families,

I hope you are well. I am writing to let you know that we will begin our sexual health unit on _____. I want to let you know about it for three reasons.

date

First, some of you saw these materials at back-to-school night. If you didn't, I want to invite you to look at them online: www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH or to contact the district and preview them now. Contact _____

at _____, _____.

name
email address phone

Second, I hope to partner with you. I would encourage you to discuss the issue at home, too. Your child may bring home **Family Homework** assignments to do with an adult in the family (however he or she defines "family"). These assignments are optional. I will always provide an **Individual Homework** assignment as an alternative for the same credit. They are also confidential. Students will NOT be asked to report back what you have discussed. The purpose of these assignments is to encourage you to communicate with one another. It's a chance to discuss your cultural or religious beliefs and your personal feelings about sexual health issues. Studies have shown that teens tend to delay sex if their families express the hope that they will. And they tend to use protection if they do have sex when their families have expressed support for *that*, especially if parents or guardians talk openly and comfortably about it. I know that for some of you that won't happen automatically, but practice can help. I hope you'll try. If more than one adult in the family wants to participate in these assignments, that's great. You may want to take turns, so the student gets special time with each adult.

Finally, if you're considering excusing your child from the unit, please call me and let's talk about it. If you decide not to have your child participate in the unit, or in particular lessons, you can get our district's waiver form from _____

at _____, _____.

name
email address phone

Please give me a call if you have any questions. I would be glad to talk.

Sincerely,

_____, _____

name title

_____, _____

email address phone

To Parents & Guardians:

Introducing *FLASH* Family Homework

Dear Families,

We would like to explain the purpose of the *FLASH* Family Homework assignments. Your child's teacher may assign just one or two homework activities or all thirteen. Each one takes about 10 minutes. Your child can do alternative assignments without you, if necessary. But we hope that once you understand why they are included, you will use these Family Homework assignments with your child.

The writers of the *FLASH* program know that the family is the one who teaches children values about sexual health. Sexual health education in school can teach children about their bodies and about preventing pregnancy and diseases. But only families can teach children when and under what circumstances people should begin dating, or how they should treat their dating partner or spouse, or what sorts of behaviors are never okay. Research shows that when families have these discussions it helps children make healthier choices.

Some families are already talking about these things. For other families, it may be more difficult. *FLASH* Family Homework gives you a chance to talk with your child about many topics related to sexual health. It raises topics that might be difficult for you to bring up on your own. It lets you share your thoughts and beliefs with your child. We hope you will take the chance to do this.

Children are surrounded by messages in the media telling them how to behave sexually. For those of you who have moved here from other countries, these messages may be extra-powerful, as your children are learning what it is to be "American." Although the power of the media is huge, we know that family communication is also very powerful. One of the only ways to weaken the power of the media is to speak clearly and directly to your children about what you believe, why you believe it, and what your hopes are for them.

Research shows that when children hear clear expectations from their parents, they are much more likely to follow them. Whether they are boys or girls; masculine, feminine or neither; gay or straight, they all need to know you love them the way they are. The *FLASH* program educates children about sexual health. One of the most important pieces of this education is the learning and support they receive at home. Thank you for taking 10 minutes each night to have these important conversations with your child.

Sincerely,
FLASH Program Authors
Public Health – Seattle & King County